

## Guinea Bissau



The map of Guinea-Bissau<sup>1</sup>

### Country Profile

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau borders the North Atlantic Ocean between the Republic of Senegal and Guinea on the West African mainland with 18 islands off the coast, covers a superficial land area of 36 120km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 1.586 million. There are 21 living languages spoken in Guinea-Bissau with the most prominent being the Balanta Ketonho. The elite in the civil and public services speak Crioulo, a mixture of Portuguese and ethnic languages. Portuguese is the official language.

Guinea Bissau is classified 172<sup>nd</sup> out of 177 countries features in the United Nations' Human Development Index of 2004 with 88% of the population living on less than US\$1 a day. Agriculture is the dominant economic sector and engages 82% of the labour force with the remaining 18% in the industrial and services sectors. Industry contributes approximately 15% to GDP and includes a sugar refinery, a rice and groundnut processing plant, brewing and urban construction. Guinea Bissau ranks sixth in the world for cashew-nut production.

The recent discovery of oil fields along the coast with estimated production capacity of 30 000 to 60 000 barrels per day (bpd) has renewed hope may yet help resolve the country's recurrent government budgetary problems.

### Selected economic indicators: 2005 and May 2006

GDP – 2006	295.1 million US\$
GDP per capita – 2005	192 US\$
Growth rate – 2005	2.9%
Inflation (1% of GDP)-2005	-0.7%
Budget balance (% of GDP) – 2005	-10.1%
Investment (% of GDP) – 2005	12.8%
Domestic Savings (% of GDP) – 2005	-1.4%
Total Debt (% of GDP)- 2005	279.3 %

The abysmal economic description above is the result of six turbulent years and after, beginning from 1998 to 1999 with the civil war, which destroyed most of the country's infrastructure.

### **The Educational System**

Primary education is four years followed by secondary education that may take three to six years in the specific field of choice. Education is compulsory from age 7 to 13, however in 2000 UNICEF estimates that 65.4% of children between ages 5 to 14 years in Guinea Bissau were engaged in trading, farming or domestic labour. This situation worsens during the cashew harvest when school-going children are withdrawn from school to work the fields.

Adult literacy rate is projected at 58.1% male and 27.4% female in 2003<sup>ii</sup>. Youth literacy rates<sup>iii</sup> between ages 15 to 24 for both sexes stood at 61% in 2002.

### **National ICT Policies and Strategies**

Guinea Bissau has no ICT policy<sup>iv</sup>. There is also no evidence at present of government moves to initiate one. However the country promulgated its Telecommunications Basic Law, Decree No. 03-99 in 1999. That decree stipulates as part of government policy among other to:

- Promote the development of telecommunications in Guinea Bissau through the definition of an adequate legal framework in accordance with globalization demands
- Promote and emphasize the role of telecommunications as a fundamental instrument in economic and social development
- Create conditions favorable to the emergence and development of competition in the telecommunications sector in order to facilitate access to users of new service at best prices
- Develop and improve telecommunications services of public use aiming at a better coverage nationwide in terms of universal access to telecommunications.

The government of Guinea Bissau deregulated the telecommunications sector and in 2003 replaced Guinea-Telecommunications the national carrier which till then was 51% owned by Portugal Telecom with 49% to the State. The new company Guinetel<sup>v</sup> is 90% state-owned with 10% shares to the company workers.

The move was to break the monopoly of Portugal Telecom and make way for cellular and mobile telephone operators to invest in the telecommunications sector. The twenty-year contract signed with Portugal Telecom was to expire in 2009.

### Teledensity and Reception

In 2003 there were 10,600 main telephone lines as against 13,120 in 1997 owing to the destruction of the telephone infrastructure during the war. By 2005 there were 67,000<sup>vi</sup> mobile cellular phones in use in Guinea Bissau – an average of 49 telephones per 1000 persons, inclusive of main telephone lines.

Internet access is available only in Bissau, the capital where many cybercafés offer low speed connection. The youth are mainly the occasional users of the internet. As at 2006 Guinea Bissau had about 30,000 internet users.

There is no nationwide coverage of the mobile phone networks – only Bissau, the capital, boasts of two mobile phone operators- Areeba and Telecel.

Further, there is a limited number of fixed lines (mostly in tens), in the other big cities and localities. There is no telephone infrastructure, mobile or fixed, or internet in the rural areas.

### Electric Power Supply

Electrification covers only 12%<sup>vii</sup> of the country and tariffs are five times the levels of its neighbour, the Republic of Senegal. Currently, only Bissau has power supply for 18 hours a day, from 6pm till noon of the next day. It is unusual for the national electricity company to provide power for 24 hours owing to the company's financial difficulties that have made it impossible for them to purchase fuel to power their generators. The other big cities like Bafata, Cacineke Cachea and Catio usually have power supplied from 6 pm till midnight of each day.

It is estimated that the envisaged Saltino Hydroelectric dam<sup>viii</sup> to be constructed to span the Corubal river will be able to meet about 60% of the country's needs by 2015.

### Government's Educational Policy

In April 2000, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology launched its educational policy<sup>ix</sup> that sought among others to:

- Correct the inadequate number of trained and qualified personnel in the workforce
- Identify choice priorities in the development of realistic plans and strategies with a view to halt the degradation of the quality of teaching
- In the five years 2000-2004, concentrate on implementing an assistance project for the basic education sector with funding from the government, the world Bank and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

### Education and Civil War Effects

The civil war of 1998 to 1999 displaced both the population and the schools leaving in its path destroyed school buildings, furniture and equipment. In April 2000 10% of the schools were 1-graders, 26% were 2-graders and 50% were 4-graders with unqualified teachers who have mostly only 4 years of basic education-primary school leavers<sup>x</sup>.

Children take about thrice as much time to complete the curriculum because of schools running three to four shifts per day of rotating children due to inadequate infrastructure whilst repeated teachers' strikes owing to government's non-payment of salaries contributes further complications to the problem.

In some communities, like the village of Kampada Namoante<sup>xi</sup>, children haul their own seats to school while teachers turn up carrying blackboards. The community of poor cashew nut farmers pooled resources and built their own community school and appointed teachers whom they pay monthly.

The teachers' monthly pay may be a few coins or mangoes or whatever is harvested from the field according to the affordability of the parents. This nationwide problem is the heritage left by the civil war that ended seven (7) years ago.

### Secondary and Technical Education

In year 2,000, only 8,000 students, constituting 6% of the eligible age group were registered in the fifteen (15) public secondary schools instead of available placements for 26,000 students. The country lacks technical schools than can train and adapt graduates for the employment market.

### Tertiary Education

In 1997 Tertiary education catered for about 1000 students as depicted in the table below.

### Higher Education Enrollment In Guinea-Bissau (1997)<sup>xii</sup>

<u>School</u>	<u>Number</u>
Medicine	64
Law	300
Education	400
Nursing	120
Sports	84

The two most important institutions, the schools of Law and Medicine are almost completely financially dependent upon foreign assistance. The financial and technical dependency of these schools causes systematic delays throughout the academic year.

The very first university in Guinea Bissau, the Universidade Colinas de Boé<sup>xiii</sup> (UCB), was established in September 2003 by the International Finance Company in the private sector branch of the World Bank of the Work Bank's to provide business and management training.

The second university, which was established in 2004, Universidade Amilcar Cabral<sup>xiv</sup>, is Guinea Bissau public university. It has strong government support and government budget allocation. Guinea-Bissau is partnering with a Portuguese University to deliver the programmes ULL (l'Universidade Lusofona de Lisboa) in the University's schools. The university is larger than UCB, has more students and more financial means.

The third tertiary institution, CENFA (Centre de Formucao Administrativo)<sup>xv</sup>, which was established twenty (20) years ago is the institution that trained most of the skilled staff in the civil and public services. It has hitherto functioned as a vocational/professional training institution. CENFA is headquartered in Bissau with campuses in 3 other provinces. CENFA and UAC are public-owned but privately managed whilst UCB is a purely private institution.

### Levels of ICT Skills in Tertiary Education

CENFA has low-trained faculty<sup>xvi</sup> who lack IT skills. CENFA's only library was looted during the civil war. UCB has highly trained faculty, including 4 PhDs, 11 Masters; 31 Licences and 6 Bas. Most of their professors are active businessmen or managers in the public service. The University has a few computers and a specialized library endowed with about 600 titles. However the faculty lacks IT skills. UCB does not have its own facilities and is housed in a renovated cashew nut factory.

UAC is located in a former army base near the city centre in Bissau. The university has 16 classrooms and well equipped facilities. UAC has a few computers and has made IT a

priority. It uses the library run by INEP, the National Institute for Research, which is the country's best. The library is the largest and most endowed in Lusophone Africa.

### Educational Infrastructure Reconstruction

In 2006 the African Development Bank (ADB) agreed to finance Guinea-Bissau's modest reconstruction project to improve the supply and quality of primary education in an effort to reduce the adult illiteracy rate which is 60% and even higher for women at 75%.

The project envisages the following:

- the construction of 220 new classrooms including 80 to replace the 'Baracas' built from palm leaves and thatch ;
- rehabilitation of 100 damaged schools ;
- the construction of 50 annex buildings ;
- provide basic furniture and equipment for the new classrooms namely, 3960 two-seater desk-benches for pupils, 220 boards and 220 cupboards, 220 desks and 220 chairs for the teachers ; and
- extend and systematize two (2) vocational training centres currently not in use to provide twenty-one (21) basic trade courses as a means to introduce vocational education into the training mechanism.

The project will offer 15,000 more additional places in the school system and help augment the basic rate of primary education from 60% to 70% in 2007.

In addition, the project offers workers the opportunity for them to hone their skills while in service. The project will enable sensitization programs on sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, malaria and provide mechanisms for the integration of vocational skills into the educational system countrywide. Two vocational institutes are to be rehabilitated under the project to prepare 7,000 learners of 21 basic trades for their first job<sup>xvii</sup>.

Whilst the government desired to introduce Information Technology courses into the primary school curriculum, it has to settle for the modest rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic schools nationwide owing to financial constraints. The government will fund 10% of the project costs of US\$ 11.3 Million.

### Constraints

The impediments to the meaningful introduction of ICT into the educational curriculum in Guinea-Bissau at all levels may be attributed to:

- The government's limited and inadequate budgetary and financial resources;

- The inexistence of high level Information Technology training institutes or schools;
- The general lack of IT skills in the teaching population;
- The low levels of trained-teacher population;
- The poorly ICT equipped training institutions;
- The irregular and insufficient electric power supply across the country that obliges the citizenry to resort to fuel powered generators for their individual energy needs at great cost - a cost that cannot be borne by the national government in the educational sector even when computers are made freely available by donors given the current state of affairs;
- The inadequate and unavailable <sup>1</sup>telecommunication infrastructure and services including internet across the country; and
- The concentration of national efforts on the massive reconstruction and rehabilitation of infrastructure destroyed in the 1998-1999 civil war.

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<sup>i</sup> The CIA World Factbook

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/pu.html>

<sup>iii</sup> UNESCO education resources - <http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php>

<sup>iv</sup> [www.uneca.org/aisi/nici/country\\_profiles/Documents-%20French/guinee-bissau.doc](http://www.uneca.org/aisi/nici/country_profiles/Documents-%20French/guinee-bissau.doc)

<sup>v</sup> Lettres de CSD PTT – Coopération Solidarité Développement – [http://www.csdptt.org/lire\\_lettres218.html](http://www.csdptt.org/lire_lettres218.html)

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/pu.html>

<sup>vii</sup> [http://www.africonstruct.org/downloads/studies/Sector\\_Profile\\_Guinea\\_Bissau.pdf](http://www.africonstruct.org/downloads/studies/Sector_Profile_Guinea_Bissau.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> Bernard Krief Consultants, Investment Conference in construction and Civil Engineering, Central and West Africa: [http://www.africonstruct.org/downloads/studies/Sector\\_Profile\\_Guinea\\_Bissau.pdf](http://www.africonstruct.org/downloads/studies/Sector_Profile_Guinea_Bissau.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> Déclaration de la Politique Educative, Ministère de l'Education, de la Science et de la Technologie de la Guinée-Bissau, Avril 2000 : [www.confemen.org/IMG/html/guineeb.html](http://www.confemen.org/IMG/html/guineeb.html)

<sup>x</sup> Government policies and programs to eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor, The US Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs – [http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/iclp/tda2004/guinea\\_bissau.htm](http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/iclp/tda2004/guinea_bissau.htm)

<sup>xi</sup> [www.blackukonline.com/general/articles.php?from=80&cat=151](http://www.blackukonline.com/general/articles.php?from=80&cat=151)

<sup>xii</sup> [http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/soe/cihe/inhea/profiles/Guinea\\_Bissau.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/inhea/profiles/Guinea_Bissau.htm)

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[http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/bsn.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/GBSN\\_GuineaBissau/\\$FILE/GBSN\\_GuineaBissau\\_HElecho\\_May2006.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/bsn.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/GBSN_GuineaBissau/$FILE/GBSN_GuineaBissau_HElecho_May2006.pdf)

<sup>xiv</sup> [http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/bsn.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/GB+03/\\$FILE/03+GB+Assessment.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/bsn.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/GB+03/$FILE/03+GB+Assessment.pdf)

<sup>xv</sup> [http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/bsn.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/GB+03/\\$FILE/03+GB+Assessment.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/bsn.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/GB+03/$FILE/03+GB+Assessment.pdf)

<sup>xvi</sup> [http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/bsn.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/GB+03/\\$FILE/03+GB+Assessment.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/bsn.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/GB+03/$FILE/03+GB+Assessment.pdf)

<sup>xvii</sup> <http://www.afrol.com/articles/10426>